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parents kept up a constant chirping and approached quite near while we were around. They must have commenced nesting about the middle of March.

The highest I ever found a nest built, was about thirty-five feet up in a cypress. This nest was easily seen from the ground, and contained two perfectly fresh eggs. The parent birds were not around. Golden Gate Park of this city is another breeding place of these birds. Here they are not disturbed, and they build commonly in the bushes and trees. One nest I saw was built in a brush-pile. A song sparrow had its nest in the other end of the same pile.

The eggs of this species are really very pretty. The ground color is of a greenish blue. This is splashed and dotted with liver brown, and purple washings are often noticeable. I have one egg which looks as tho someone had taken a brush and painted a pale purple band around the center of it. Some eggs are covered over the entire larger end with the brown markings, until it appears like one solid color. The eggs are from two to four in each full set.

The Nuttall sparrows seem to find their food mostly along the ground. They feed in the roadways, a good deal like the English sparrow. In fact the two species are quite similar in several respects.

San Francisco, Cal.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

The *Empidonax* From Santa Catalina Island.—In the March number of THE CONDOR for 1905 (page 51) I presented evidence adverse to the contention that the *Empidonax* breeding on the Santa Barbara Islands is a distinct form. Additional material obtained since then has confirmed the conclusion that "*Empidonax insulicola*" has no basis for recognition.

Mr. Charles Richardson, Jr., secured 8 skins in the vicinity of Avalon, Catalina Island, from April 15 to 20, 1905. The birds were then nest-building, so there is no doubt whatever but that they were quartered in the locality for the summer. Mr. Richardson and I together carefully compared these 8 specimens with my large series of mainland *difficilis*. Not a single character was detected by which the Catalina birds could be distinguished, when adults in breeding plumage only were considered.

It was found that the dorsal brownness of some specimens is obviously due to an advanced stage of wear which results in the loss of the bright yellowish olive which overlies the brown. A selected feather from the interscapular tract (in an early spring migrant before wear has had much effect) shows the contour portion to be centrally olive brown and toward the ends of the barbs bright yellowish olive. Examination of a corresponding feather from a June bird shows very plainly that the browner tone of the upper surface is due to the loss of the yellowish distal portion of the barbs. In an unworn bird the brighter terminal portion of each feather overlaps and more or less conceals the brown central portion of the next feather posteriorly. As abrasion gradually removes the terminal portions of the barb, the back of the bird appears more and more brownish.

Changes occur in the other feather tracts which affect the tones of coloration in a similar way.

Of course there is variation in the rate of wear in the same species of bird in different localities; and also individual variation in the intensities of colors to begin with. Taking all of these things into consideration I fail to find any character by which to discriminate the Catalina birds from any other local aggregation of *Empidonax difficilis* which I have seen. The name "*insulicola*" is thus getting so objectionable as to invite immediate interment in our synonymic graveyard. It is very easy to describe a "sp. nov." upon inadequate grounds, but vastly more tedious, and a thankless job all around, to disprove it. I know both, from experience!—J. GRINNELL, Pasadena, Cal.

Peculiarities of Ducks in Nesting.—In June and July, 1903, in northeastern Montana, I found large colonies of ducks breeding, principally blue-winged and green-winged teals, mallards, canvasbacks and spoonbills. I was interested in the fact that all the ducks just mentioned frequently deposit their eggs in each other's nests, it being no uncommon thing to find the eggs of three varieties of ducks in one nest. The eggs of the larger ducks and those of the teal were often found together.

I also found the mallards nesting in the short grass on the hillsides and even on the tops of the hills a mile or more from water.—G. WILLETT, *Los Angeles, Cal.*

Whistling Swans.—A flock of between 15 and 20 whistling swans (*Olor columbianus*) came onto the Alameda Gun Club's marsh in Sonoma County about the first of December, 1905. They were reported by the keeper at different times up to the last shot, February 15, when they were still there. The swans would not stay in one flock all the time, but would separate into bands of half-a-dozen to feed in the different ponds. They did not appear to be very shy, and not one was touched, as the law forbids. Never before had more than one or two at a time been seen.—LOUIS BOLANDER, *San Francisco, Cal.*

Eggs of the Sage Grouse.—Having noticed some confliction in regard to the number of eggs per set ascribed to the sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) I give here the result of observations made in northeastern Montana in 1903. From May to July of that year I examined about 50 nests of this species, the smallest set numbering eight eggs, and the largest fifteen. Both of these are unusual, the general number being from ten to thirteen.—G. WILLETT, *Los Angeles, Cal.*

Unusual Breeding Records at Escondido.—A nest of the golden pileolated warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla chrysola*) with four fresh eggs was found by me in a willow grove in the San Pasqual Valley—elevation 350 feet above sea level—on June 16, 1901. The grove contained a number of patches of wild rose and the nest was placed at the margin of one of these near the edge of the grove at about a foot from the ground. It is large and uncouth-appearing for a warbler and is made of stems of nettles with their leaves, and willow leaves and blossoms, all green; also old dry nettle leaves. The lining is of dry shreds of grass, loosely laid in. When found it was all slightly covered and obscured by the leaves of the rose and nettles. Its present measurements are about 8 inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in depth outside and $1\frac{1}{4}$ by 1 inch inside. When found the depth was much greater. It has flattened since then considerably. Both birds were seen and the male secured. On June 18, 1905, I saw a male of the species in the same grove but did not see his mate who was probably holding down a nest in the vicinity, which I could not find. These are the only times I have ever seen the species here, in nesting time.

On June 18, 1905, I found a nest and eggs of the Bell sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*) in the same wild rose patch referred to above and not more than ten feet from where the warbler's nest was taken. No bird was secured but both were seen and noticed for half an hour as they fluttered around thru the brush, coming within a few feet of me. This is a fairly common bird around San Diego and might reasonably be expected to be met with here, but I never knew of its breeding here before.

San Pasqual proved attractive to the Traill flycatcher (*Empidonax trailli*) also last season, and I found it breeding for the first time on June 4. The nest was in a clump of nettles on the edge of a water hole in a grove of willows and was the exact counterpart of the nest of a lazuli bunting. The bird secured was identified for me by Mr. Grinnell.

One would expect that these three species would not be so very rare here as all three breed in this county in localities not so vastly different nor so very far from this neighborhood. But in years of hunting and collecting here these are the only breeding records in my knowledge.

In the Field and Study notes in January CONDOR Mr. Grinnell speaks of a wood duck (*Aix sponsa*) being taken near Oxnard, Ventura County. In November last Mr. F. X. Holzner of San Diego showed me a beautiful specimen of that species which had been sent to him to mount from Ramona where it had been shot. Ramona is about 15 miles southeast of Escondido and about 25 miles from San Diego. This is likely to prove the most southerly record for the species in the State.—C. S. SHARP, *Escondido, Cal.*

Results of a Gale at Pacific Beach.—During a heavy gale that lasted for several days in the latter part of November, 1905, Mr. H. W. Marsden found a number of rhinoceros auklets (*Cerorhinca monocerata*), Pacific fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis glupischa*), and dark-bodied shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) dead or dying along the shore at Pacific Beach, San Diego County, Cal. His most interesting capture there was a young female mew gull (*Larus canus*) on Nov. 30, which is now No. 14829 of my collection.—LOUIS B. BISHOP, *New Haven, Conn.*